



# Seattle Area Archivists Newsletter

**Summer 2004**

## Steering Committee and Contact Information

### From the Chair

[Crossing Organizational Boundaries Project Receives Awards](#)

[MOHAI Awarded Grant for the Niendorff Marine History Scrapbooks](#)

### Staff News

[SAA Spring Meeting, NARA](#)

[SAA Winter Meeting, Corbis](#)

[Pacific Northwest History Conference Report](#)

["Cultural Places and Natural Spaces: Memory, History and Landscape"](#)

## Steering Committee & Contact Information

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[Back to top](#)**

## From The Chair

*Helice Koffler*

As another membership year wraps up, it is almost impossible not to become somewhat introspective. Looking back over these past several months, it becomes clear that Seattle Area Archivists has invested heavily in outreach opportunities. We purchased a portable display panel and developed a small

exhibit on the work of the organization. So far this display panel has made its appearance at the Archives Week Expo event last October, the November AKCHO meeting, and even has traveled as far away as the Pacific Northwest History Conference down in Olympia last month.

We hope to build upon this momentum in the coming year by looking for more opportunities to collaborate effectively with allied professional and cultural heritage organizations to develop useful projects and initiatives that will serve the local community. Already we are playing a more active role in helping to plan for Archives Week 2004. Our main (and ongoing) contribution to this year's celebration is the development of an online directory of local area archives (more about the project in this issue). It is expected that our Web site will become the main clearinghouse for information on Archives Weeks events in the Seattle area as well. We also have been investigating the possibility of sponsoring a

Society of American Archivists continuing education workshop in Seattle next year. I encourage all members to send in their ideas for programs as the new steering committee begins its planning.

I also would like to thank the 2003-2004 steering committee members for their work and cooperation over the past year. Those of us remaining on the committee wish the outgoing members the best of luck as they make their transition back into normal life. Interestingly, some of those committee members are going on to new positions (one quite far away!), but we hope that they all will stay active in the profession and remain connected to Seattle Area Archivists.

[Back to top](#)

## **“Crossing Organizational Boundaries” Project Receives Awards**

On behalf of the 12-member partnership collaboration, Crossing Organizational Boundaries, the [Museum of History & Industry](#) (MOHAI) and the [University Of Washington Libraries](#) wish to announce that the COB project has recently received two awards: [The Association for King County Historical Organizations](#) (AKCHO) 2004 Long Term Project Award, and the [Washington Museum Association's](#) 2004 Award for Project Excellence.

*Crossing Organizational Boundaries* is a two-year project funded by a 2001 National Leadership Grant for Library and Museum Collaboration from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). The results of the collaboration can be accessed at [King County Snapshots](#). If you have not yet visited this site you are in for a treat. 12,000 19th and 20th century images document people, places, and events in the county's

urban, suburban, and rural communities. The site allows searches limited to an individual institution's collections as well generalized searches across all institutions. The other members of the partnership are:

- [Black Heritage Society of Washington State](#)
- [Eastside Heritage Center](#)
- [Maple Valley Historical Society](#)
- [Northwest Railway Museum](#)
- [Puget Sound Maritime Historical Society](#)
- [Rainier Valley Historical Society](#)
- [Renton Historical Museum](#)
- [Shoreline Historical Museum](#)
- [White River Valley Museum](#)
- [Wing Luke Asian Museum](#)

The Long Term Project Award honors individuals and groups which advanced the cause of historic preservation, interpretation, and education in King County. Past recipients of the award include the

**Southwest Seattle Historical Society's** Memory Book Project which documented the stories of the "Long Timers" of West Seattle (2000) and the **Nordic Heritage Museum**, the Ballard Historical Society and the Swedish Finn Historical Society for The Vanishing Generation, an outstanding oral history project that resulted in 123 interviews (2002).

The Award for Project Excellence recognizes outstanding achievement in the

field of museum work. Up to eight awards are given annually. Past recipients of this award include the **Edmonds-South Snohomish County Historical Society** for preserving the endangered Ganahl-Hanley Log Cabin in Edmonds (2001) and the **Mukilteo Historical Society** and artisan Tim Sadley for their restoration and preservation of the endangered historic Mukilteo Pioneer Cemetery (2002).

[Back to top](#)

## **MOHAI Awarded Grant for the Niendorff Marine History Scrapbooks**

Thanks to the Washington Preservation Initiative, a rare scrapbook collection in the **Museum of History and Industry (MOHAI)** archives is being preserved and made more accessible to scholars, researchers and the general public.

The Niendorff scrapbook collection was given to the Museum of History & Industry in 1989, and is in fair condition. Its pages are made of acidic paper and have begun to crumble in places, and there are numerous clippings that have become detached. The Museum has received a Washington Preservation Initiative award of Library Services and Technology Act funds to create a microfilm version of the scrapbooks. The work is being done by OCLC Digital Collection & Preservation Services at their branch facility in Lacey and will be completed by the end of August.

Mrs. Hazel (Woods) Niendorff (1898-1991) created an amazing scrapbook collection pertaining to marine casualties and other events in the North Pacific Ocean. She began this gigantic project after she was doing some research work and discovered

that there was no comprehensive and authentic record of maritime disasters. Undeterred, Mrs. Niendorff created one herself. The territory she studied included the California coast north of San Francisco, reaching up into Oregon, Washington, British Columbia, Alaska, as well as around to Siberia and adjacent waters. Her sources included 75 years of newspaper files in the Northwest, extracts from rare old volumes in private and public libraries, general histories, government records, and correspondence. Mrs. Niendorff also undertook some personal visits along the coast by canoe and trail-- along the "Graveyard of the Pacific" -- for the purposes of obtaining photographs of places where unusually interesting wrecks had occurred.

Mrs. Niendorff collected newspaper clippings and she hand-typed narrative accounts of the witnesses and survivors of shipwrecks, or what the rescuers found when they located whatever remains there were to be found. In addition to the newspaper clippings and transcriptions, there are whole and excerpted booklets,

pamphlets, charts and tables, listing a wealth of details, such as specific cargo shipments and items of value that were transported, arrival dates, departure dates, information about crew and passengers, etc.

The collection, which was begun in 1926 and ended in the 1960s, comprises 76 volumes. Of these, 38 volumes will be microfilmed. In addition to the subject of marine disasters, Mrs. Niendorff collected

information about the development of the Pacific Northwest shipping industry in general, and such related topics as the lumber industry, wheat, whaling, fur trading, and outstanding events as the wreck of the Clara Nevada in 1898 and the wreck of the St. Nicholas in 1808. There are singular volumes pertaining to the San Juan Islands, Port Gamble, Port Blakeley, Port Ludlow, Port Madison, Port Discovery, Utsalady, Grays Harbor, and Seabeck.

[Back to top](#)

## Staff News

### New Staff at King County Archives

**Eric Fair** has recently joined the [King County Archives](#) staff as an assistant archivist. Eric brings over six years of archives and records management experience. Most recently he served as the Processing Archivist/Records Analyst for the Archdiocese of Chicago, the largest diocesan archives in the United States. There he participated in several projects, including the Joseph Cardinal Bernardin Addresses Electronic Conversion Project and the processing of the John Cardinal Cody Papers. Additionally, he held Graduate Assistant positions at the American Catholic History Research Center and University Archives at The Catholic University of America and the Special Collections Department of the University of Missouri-Kansas City. Eric received his Bachelor's

and Master's Degrees in History from Illinois State University, as well as a Master of Science in Library Science from The Catholic University of America.

Eric is currently working on processing King County Council ordinances from 1984 to 1997, and revising the archives database systems. We are very pleased to welcome Eric to Seattle.

Also joining the King County Archives staff is intern **Kendra Finney**. Kendra, who has just completed her first year in the program at Western Washington University, is assisting Eric in the Council ordinance project and honing her reference skills this spring and summer.

### Valoise Armstrong Accepts Position at Eisenhower Presidential Library

Valoise Armstrong, Archivist at [NARA's Pacific Alaska Region](#), has accepted a position as an archivist at the Eisenhower Presidential Library, also operated by NARA, in Abilene, Kansas. She will be relocating to Kansas in mid-July. Valoise began her career at NARA in January 1999 when she came to Seattle as an Archivist trainee. Valoise had previously worked in

the University Archives and Special Collections at the University of Arkansas at Little Rock. While in Seattle, Valoise has been active in Northwest Archivists and served on the steering committee of Seattle Area Archivists. We wish her well in her new position and move to the Sunflower State.

[Back to top](#)

## **SAA Spring Meeting, NARA** *Helice Koffler, Chair*

The final general meeting of the Seattle Area Archivists 2004-2004 membership year took place at the NARA Pacific Alaska Region on May 20. Over twenty members and guests were in attendance to hear a presentation, "The Breath of Life: Facilitating Community Access to Archival Collections of Native American Materials," given by Laurel Sercombe.

Laurel, who has been the Archivist for the Ethnomusicology Program at the University of Washington's School of Music since 1982, provided the audience with an overview of the collections at the Ethnomusicology Archives and she also discussed her involvement with the Breath of Life workshop, which was held at the University of Washington last fall.

Founded in 1962, the Ethnomusicology Division at the University of Washington is one of the most well known departments of its kind in the country. The third largest ethnomusicology collection in a university setting, the Ethnomusicology Archives, holds field recordings gathered by UW faculty and graduate students, as well as live concert recordings and moving images of musical events held at the school and other venues (including the Northwest Folklife Festival). The Archives also maintains a

collection of over 250 musical instruments, an outgrowth of the school's artist residency program. Laurel is responsible for cataloging all of these materials and is deeply committed to making the collection more accessible. For example, a multimedia database describing the musical instrument collection is now available on the UW Digital Collections site:  
<http://content.lib.washington.edu/ethnomusicweb/index.html>

Laurel's interest in making her collections more accessible extends to her involvement with the innovative Breath of Life workshop. Inspired by, and modeled after, a successful program created by the University of California, Berkeley, the workshop was organized by Alice Taff, a research associate with the UW Department of Linguistics, with the goal of helping Native American tribal members try to revitalize their languages. The weeklong workshop, which took place in September 2003, brought together some forty members of thirteen local tribes. Mornings were spent working with faculty and graduate students from the Department of Linguistics developing the researchers' understanding of basic linguistic tools. Afternoon sessions, guided by archivists, focused on using the archival materials relating to Native

American languages held by the Special Collections Division of the UW Libraries, the Ethnomusicology Archives, and the Burke Museum Archives.

Laurel recounted the challenges faced by both the participants and the archivists in gaining and providing access to these materials. Among the most daunting obstacles encountered by the participants was the intimidating nature of archives and special collections, which was particularly exemplified by the Melville Jacobs Collection--an important collection of field notebooks and recordings which has restricted access requirements (due to be lifted in 2006). Citing a controversial decision by another anthropologist to destroy the rare recordings he had collected

out of respect to their sacred nature, as well as her own experiences in assisting Skagit elder, Vi Hilbert, with, what at first had seemed to Laurel to be a highly idiosyncratic way of organizing her archive, Laurel underscored the need for all archivists to acknowledge and be aware of the ways in which different cultural values inform our ideas about collecting, documentation, and preservation. The meeting concluded with the announcement of the results of the recent election and the introduction of incoming steering committee members, Anne Frantilla, Birgit Hansen, and Lisa Sanders, which was followed by refreshments and door prizes, many of which had been either donated or selected by outgoing Treasurer, Carolyn McClurkan.

[Back to top](#)

## **SAA Winter Meeting, Corbis**

*Peter Schmid, Editor and Member-at-Large*

Seattle Area Archivists met in the historic Dexter-Horton Building in downtown Seattle on February 26 for a tour of stock image giant **Corbis**. Corbis' extensive collection is comprised primarily of the Bettman Archives, and is continually adding the work of contemporary photographers as well as purchasing private collections.

Upon entering Corbis we were asked to sign non-disclosure agreements—very different for those of us who are used to public archives! The lobby of the old building with its neo-classical columns looked strange with the addition of (very) visible iron earthquake support struts and modern office cubicles.

Meeting in a conference room, we learned the general background on the company's formation by Bill Gates in 1989 and the purchase of the over 11 million-image Bettman Archive, which had been housed in

lower Manhattan for decades. Corbis transferred the collection in existing storage containers (primarily metal file cabinets) to the underground storage at Iron Mountain ([www.ironmountain.com](http://www.ironmountain.com)) in Pennsylvania. An abandoned iron ore mine, Iron Mountain has been used for records storage since 1975. Underground the naturally cool temperatures provide a cool, stable storage environment. Currently, the 10,000 square-foot facility maintains a temperature of 45 degrees F., cool but still tolerable for people work in. But as reported in the June 10 edition of NewsHour with Jim Lehrer, the temperature will be dropped to -4 degrees F. this November, stabilizing the present condition of the images for, potentially, thousands of years according to photograph preservation expert Henry Wilhelm. (The full text of the 11-minute piece entitled "Frozen in Time," with photos, can be viewed at:

[www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june04/bettmann\\_06-10.html](http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/media/jan-june04/bettmann_06-10.html)

Streamed audio and video are also available on the site).

Corbis has developed a unique in-house cataloging system and authority language, rather than one based purely on an existing authority such as LCSH or Thesaurus for Graphic Materials.

Rights and permissions are handled on a case-by-case basis, depending on the copyright status of the image. Each image is watermarked with a unique identifier and its use can be tracked on the Web. Corbis allows a good deal of access to viewable images on their site. Though these images can be downloaded and used, they can be

tracked if the use is not licensed, at which time a user will be contacted by the company and provided the opportunity to buy permission to use the image. The staff attorney emphasized that Corbis assumes that most users are acting in good faith, and does not file claims against people unless they have blatantly ignored warnings about improper use of images.

We were able to tour the image-editing area where digital photographs are edited for transfer to customers all over the world, often within 20 minutes. At the School for Scanning that I recently attended in Chicago, I learned that this is referred to as a “calibrated environment,” ensuring that images will all look the same to the technician without interference from natural light and reflections from brightly-colored paints or clothing.

[Back to top](#)

## **Pacific Northwest History Conference Report**

*Marjorie Ann Reeves, UW MLIS student*

For those of you who missed the **Pacific Northwest History Conference** in Olympia, it provided wonderful opportunities to learn, gather new information and meet new friends. At the last 2003 Seattle Area Archivists meeting, I won the registration fee as a door prize.

The real difficulty in attending the conference lay in choosing among the many interesting workshops and sessions, without the time to attend all. The first workshop I attended on Thursday was “Preservation Basics for Small Organizations” presented by Terri Nelson, **Washington State Archives**. The subject was treated with an enthusiasm that spread through the audience and encompassed us. She assured us several times that we all would be the experts by the end of the workshop, and certificates were given out as verification. As one of the door

prize winners, I now possess my very own bone folder. In the afternoon I participated in the “Basic Exhibit Design and Fabrication” workshop lead by Melissa Parr of **Washington State Historical Society** and Cliff Vancura of Otak, Inc. Workshop discussion focused on poster design and layout to achieve desired results. Melissa and Cliff discussed their successes and failures in putting together traveling displays for the state. We were supplied with material to build our own displays and instructors critiqued the finished projects.

Friday’s schedule offered many excellent sessions making the selection difficult again. The morning started off with a speech from Washington’s Secretary of State, Sam Reed. He discussed his efforts to keep the state library system intact, and impressed me with his understanding of how important books

and documentation are to the public. I attended the morning session titled "Archives and Manuscripts in the Classroom," presented by Montana and Washington educators and archivists who work to provide History Day to the school systems. The afternoon session I chose was "More Than Your Backyard: The Importance of Local History in

Understanding the Past" a panel discussion by Iowa and Washington historians. Both sessions provided useful information. Thank you all for providing the conference registration fee as a prize. What I learned and was exposed to at the conference reaffirmed my conviction that I am entering the right profession.

[Back to top](#)

## "Cultural Places and Natural Spaces: Memory, History and Landscape"

*Rebecca Pixler, King County Archives*

The National Council on Public History (NCPH) and the American Society for Environmental History (ASEH) met together for the first time in Victoria, British Columbia, March 31-April 4, 2004. A joint meeting appeared to be an excellent program decision. Like public historians, many environmental historians aspire to reach an audience beyond other historians and academe. Public history, for its part, drew early inspiration from efforts to preserve archaeological and natural heritage sites. Both groups have continued to encourage protection of cultural and natural resources, hoping to influence decision- and policy-making by the resources' regulators.

I spent two days at the conference as a representative (without portfolio) of one of those non-academic audiences. I based my choice of sessions on my desire to learn more of the history which I had inherited, and of which I had been a part, as a Washington State native growing up in timber country in the shadow of Mt. Rainier.

From Robert Walls (Lafayette College), I learned that the experiences of workers like my logger cousins (once marginalized by "official" industry narratives or discounted by environmental activists) were now

actively being sought as a way to achieve a more nuanced, community based response to the timber environment. Paul Hirt (Washington State University) characterized the Cowlitz River dams of the 1960s, which inundated my first home, as part of a dying breed of river mega-projects which terminated abruptly about 1970, when the best dam sites had been taken and rising costs and environmentalism diminished public support.

I gained special insights into my family's automobile tourism from Paul Sadin (Historical Research Associates). The famous cedar-log square arch at the Nisqually entrance to Mt. Rainier National Park served automobile drivers as a symbolic marker: You have arrived! Park architecture, such as rustic service stations and viewpoints carefully and solidly bounded by stonework, may have hindered interaction with the natural environment but also gave park visitors the confidence to enjoy the unfamiliar, and be comfortable in the face of it. (Hence, I wondered, the old National Park usage of "comfort stations" to designate restrooms?)

The subtle guiding of visitors' park experiences was further explored by Emily



Greenwald (Historical Research Associates), in her analysis of trail layout, viewpoint placement, and signage in three national parks (including that frequent childhood destination, Yellowstone). Far from encouraging visitors to encounter natural or scenic wonders in their own ways, Greenwald hypothesized that park designers carefully directed the maximum number of people in the most expeditious way to the place deemed to provide the maximum aesthetic, spiritual or photograph response for the most people.

I had never contemplated the pervasive similarity of American campground design (concentric one-way roads; distinct campsites with --invariably-- vehicle parking place, fireplace, picnic table, tent site) before hearing Terence Young (California Polytechnic State University--Pomona)'s paper on E. P. Meinecke. In the 1920s, Meinecke, a German-American botanist/forester, evolved revegetation plans for the camper-trammeled Sequoia National Park into a standard plan for campgrounds that was adopted by state and national authorities in the 1930s. (German foresters were presented in an altogether different context by Michael Imfort of Wilfred Laurier University. His paper discussed a certain kind of romantic German film of the 1950s, in which a fresh-faced heroine and a sturdy heroic forester overcame the evil machinations of an older father figure and

found love and a happy future together. The films' avid reception, suggested Imfort, was due to Germans' desire to put the Third Reich years behind them and see redemption in an enduring Teutonic archetypal image.)

Resuming my present-day archival identity, I heard two papers on the Puget Sound region. Coll Thrush (University of Washington) spoke on the persistent Native American presence at traditional dwelling or gathering places along Seattle's urban shores and waterways, even when those places had been radically changed by engineering. Fred Brown (likewise from the University of Washington), describing complementary urban and rural attitudes to the "Good Roads" movement of the early twentieth century, drew general laughter by recounting an anecdote about a Seattle newspaper editorial damning a notorious "speed trap" somewhere between Seattle and Snoqualmie. Creeping along at five miles per hour, motorists could only see (and smell) chicken coops in this displeasing rural hamlet. "Why oh why did the county commissioners allow the road to be built at all?"

I went away from the NCPH/ASEH conference feeling both enlightened and entertained. If one of the goals of both groups was to reach out to a wide range of non-academic audiences, it would appear that they are following the right path.